ENG1201 Introduction to Linguistics

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ENG 1201 - INTRODUCTION TO LINGUISTIC

Linguistic is the scientific study of human language**,** which encompasses the description of languages, the study of their origin, processes of observation, data collection, formulation of hypothesis analysis of data and formulation of theory based on the structure of the language, and the analysis of how children acquire language and how people learn languages other than their own.

Linguist is a professional language specialist who is equipped to analyze any language, regardless of whether they speak the language or not. Linguist can also collect data on language that do not have written forms and propose letters of the alphabet (orthography) for such language.

What is language?

- **Bolinger (1986:12)** Language is a system of vocal auditory communication using conventional signs composed of arbitrary patterned sound units and assembled according to a set of rules interacting with the experience of its users.
- **Safir (1921:8)** Define language as a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of voluntarily produced sounds.

Language, is a system of speech souds or signs which constitute linguistic knowledge of both speaker and addressee convey and receive information.

LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTICS

Language is the object of study for linguistics, and linguists study the structure of language empirically at all levels namely, ***phonetics***, ***phonology***, ***morphology***, ***syntax*** and ***semantics***. The linguistic study of language in relation to other disciplines such as ***philosophy, psychology, communication, sociology*** etc. has expanded its scope. In addition, researchers in the fields of language development, teaching, and publishing have developed a field of applied linguistics through linguistic study.

BRANCHES OF LINGUISTICS

Linguistics as a science covers various areas of human language which are usually discussed under two broad areas namely, ***micro-linguistics*** and ***macro-linguistics***.

MICRO-LINGUISTICS: covers the basic components or constituents of a language. This is also referred to as theoretical linguistics. Theoretical linguists study the structural aspects of language under the broad label of grammar. Grammar is further divided into form and meaning. Under form are:

- **Phonetics*:*** concerned with the study of speech sounds and how they are produced, sent across and perceived.
- **Phonology**: is the study of the system or pattern of speech sounds used in a particular language or in language in general
- **Morphology**: study of the internal structure of words and how words are formed in a language.
- **Syntax**: is the study of how words are arranged to form sentence.
- **Semantic*:*** the study of how meaning in language is created by the use and interrelationships of words, phrases, and sentences.

MACRO-LINGUISTICS: Macro-linguistics refers to aspects of linguistic study which involve the application of the findings of theoretical linguistics to the analysis of language in use. It is also called Applied Linguistics, because it involves the application of linguistics in relation to other disciplines. The sub-fields that come under this label include:

- **Sociolinguistics:** study of society on the way language is used.
- **Historical Linguistics:** study of how languages change overtime, is also known as ***diachronic linguistic*** as opposed to ***synchronic linguistic*** which is ***non-historical linguistics.***
- **Mathematical Linguistics:** is the science of patterns; it is by finding such patterns that knowledge is compressed. Thus, mathematics compresses knowledge or information.
- **Ethno-Linguistics:** is a field of linguistic *anthropology* which studies the language of a particular ethnic group
- **Psycholinguistics:** is the study of the *psychological* and *neurobiological* factors that enable humans to acquire, use, and understand language. Psycholinguistics is concerned with the psychological mechanism underlying speech production and reception. It also studies how children acquire their first language, speech perception, and loss of the ability to use and understand language.
- **Computational Linguistics:** is an interdisciplinary field dealing with the statistical and/or rule-based modeling of natural language from a computational perspective. Computational linguistics was usually performed by computer scientists who had specialized in the application of computers to the processing of a natural language
- **Clinical Linguistics*:*** is a sub-discipline of linguistics and involves the application of linguistic theory to the field of Speech-Language Pathology. Clinical linguistics plays a key role in the description, analysis and remediation of communication impairment. The study of linguistic aspects of communication development and disorders is also of relevance to linguistic theory and our understanding of language more generally.

HISTORY OF LINGUISTICS: Linguistics has its origins dating back to as far as the 5th century B.C. However, the use of the term, '*linguistics'* did not evolve until the 19th century. The origins of linguistics emerged from *philosophical studies of language* beginning with the Greeks, Romans before moving through Europe, India, and then the United States of America.

- **Linguistics in Greece (5th B.C. -13th Century A.D.)** Greece was popular for their philosophers two of whom were known for their study of the Greek grammar, ***Thrax*** and ***Protagoras***. They are credited as the first to attempt word classification which we refer to today as the parts of speech. In the first millennium BC, the Greeks were said to have developed the alphabetic system for writing the Greek language. By the second millennium the ***Myceneans*** are reported to have made use of a syllabic writing system that included the use of logograms, symbols representing words.

Various Greek scholars who contributed to the growth of linguistics include ***Protagoras, Plato, Thrax,*** and ***Zeno.*** Below is a summary of their various contributions:

1.Protagoras; word classification based on gender i.e. masculine, feminine and neuter.

2.Plato; Functional distinction of parts of speech e.g. nouns as subjects of a predicate ⊙ Distinction between verbs.

3.Thrax; Eight part of speech ⊙ First comprehensive and systematic description of Greek language.

4. Zeno; Distinction b/w form and meaning ⊙ Classification of Greek words into 4; noun, verb, conjunction and article ⊙Discovered ***case*** in Greek nouns ⊙ Distinguished b/w active and passive, transitive and intransitive verbs **(Ajiboye:220-221).**

Linguistic in Rome: The growth of linguistics in Rome was similar to that of Greece, Roman philosophers studied Latin grammar. However, the Greek philosophers were said to have been a great influence on their Roman counterparts.

The Roman philosophers used the Greek model in their analysis of Latin. The similar structures of Greek and Latin also made this possible. The study of Latin was conducted on its ***etymology***, ***morphology***, and ***syntax***. Similar varying points of view along the lines of various analogists like with the Greeks were observed among the Romans. However, a Latin scholar by the name ***Marcus Varro*** argued for the recognition and use of both parameters in analyzing word formation and their associated meanings. The study of Latin grammar was in terms of **1) the art of correct speech, letters and syllables 2) parts of speech 3) grammatical correctness, and 4) style**. The contributions of two Roman scholars to the study of Latin are worthy of note:

1.Marcus Varro; Worked on Latin grammar; etymology, morphology and syntax ⊙ Observed differences b/w Latin and Greek ⊙ Argued for the use of both principles of analogy and anomaly in analyzing language.

2.Priscian; Worked on regular inflections: ⊙ Produced texts used for teaching grammar ⊙ Define syllable as the smallest part of articulate speech of which the properties are the name of the letters, its written shape, and phonetic value ⊙ Defined word as the minimum unit of the sentence ⊙ Wrote a book on Medieval Grammar which formed foundation of medieval linguistic philosophy **(Ajiboye, 1999:222-223).**

Linguistics in the Renaissance Period: The medieval period or middle ages from the 13th century AD witnessed a time of Renaissance in the Roman Empire. It was a period during which Latin played a significant role in the educational system and in Christianity as the language of the church, scholarship, and culture. The materials prepared for the teaching of Latin is what developed into traditional or classical grammar.

Between the 14th and 17th centuries AD, the first grammars of several European languages were produced-***Italian, Spanish, French, Polish*** etc. The elite helped to promote the study of languages through printing. The focus became to provide rules of usage. During the same period, missionary work in China led to the study of the phonology and syntax of Chinese and the production of linguistic materials such as the ***Chinese dictionary.*** Comparative studies like that of ***Trigault*** between Chinese and languages of Western Europe were undertaken. The study of Hebrew and Arabic gained prominence during the Renaissance period. Arabic scholars were noted for presenting a description of the organs of speech and the mechanism for sound production. Scholars whose contributions promoted the growth of linguistics during the Renaissance period include ***Pierre, Ramec, Trigaukt, Galileo, Copernicus and Kelper.*** Two schools of thought in the field of philosophy that influenced linguistic studies significantly were ***Empiricism*** and ***Rationalism***. The first held the view that all human knowledge had its source in sense impression and operation of the mind upon those impressions in the form of generalizations while the second held the view that human knowledge had its source in the truths of human reason.

Towards the end of the 18th century a statement was made on The historical relationship between Sanskrit, Greek and Latin. The discovery that languages could be compared with one another marked the third phase in the growth of linguistics as a science, and gave ***comparative philology*** or ***comparative grammar*** which formed the focus of linguistic study in the 19th.

Linguistic in India : the growth of linguistics also had its root in India within the same period as of Greece and Rome. The grammarian was ***Panni*** and the ***Language of Sanskrit*** and the period was 4th century B.C. unlike Greek and Latin traditions, the grammar that developed in India was styled after the Hindu/Indian tradition. However, similarities b/w the Greco-Roman and Indian traditions include the arguments about the nature and versus conventional status of language; sacred Hindu texts were compiled the same way glossaries and commentaries were compiled for Greek and Latin. Indian grammarians were able to make a distinction between nouns and verbs like Plato did b/w the subject and predicate for Greek. Indian linguistic study did more work in ***phonetics*** and word structure, their classification of speech sounds was more comprehensive than any other work achieved before late 19th century.

Panni's work on the structure of words in Sanskrit made him well-known and ranked among the best. Western scholars discovered his work on Sanskrit by the middle of the 19th century and this led to the developed of philology.

Linguistic in the Late 18th and Early 19th Century : Linguistic studies blossomed during this period with research into the other aspects of language study but particularly in the area of historical and comparative linguistics. Further research was conducted on relationship between Sanskrit and European languages; Indian scholars debated general linguistic theory with focus on the nature of the word and meaning. Phonetic description comprised ***a) processes of speech production b) phonetic segments, and c) combination of speech sounds in phonological structures.*** Indian linguists identified four parts of speech-noun, verb, preposition and article. German linguists also featured prominently during this period

1.Raymond Rask (1787-1832)&Jacod Grim (1785-1863): Developed the comparative and historical study of Indo-European language family.

2.Franz Bopp (1791-1867): Author of the ***"The Sanskrit Conjugation System"*** a comparative work on Sanskrit, Germanic, Greek, Latin and Persian.

3.Benfey: The author of ***"The History of Linguistics ad Oriental Philology in Germany"***

4.Jacob Ludwig Karl Grimm (1785-1863): Founder of Germanic Studies, published a book on German grammar, and author of Grimm's Law on Sound Shift.

5. Wilhem von Humboldt (1767-1835): Authored a book on an ***Introduction to General Linguistics*.** His view that a language makes infinite use of ***finite*** means and that the grammar should be a description of the processes that make that possible came to form the basis of Chomsky's famous modern ***generative grammar.***

6.Schleicher A (1821-1868): Author of several books on historical linguistics and linguistic theory e.g. '***Compendium of the Comparative Grammar of the Indo-Germanic Languages' (1861)***

7. Max Muller (1823 - 1900): popular comparative studies through his lectures on the Science of Language (1861).

8. Cyrus H. K. Curtis (1850-1933): was a philologist known for his work on ***Principles of Greek Etymology*** (1879) which was one of the first works to reconcile comparative grammar with classical philology.

Linguistics in the 20th Century

This period can be said to have witnessed the emergence of the era of modern linguistics. Linguistic theories formed the focus in Europe and America, and were tested on language around the world. Among the several notable linguists of this period, two of them featured prominently, **Ferdinard de Saussure (1857-1913)** and **Noam Chomsky (1928-).**

Ferdinard de Saussure was a Swiss scholar often referred to as the father of modern linguistics. He is famous for his book which is a collection of his lectures on linguistic theory titled ***Cours de linguistique generale*** **(A course in General Linguistics).** In particular, Saussure is credited with developing the linguistic theory of structuralism. He is also known for his distinction between language as langue and parole. For Saussure, langue is 'a storehouse' of grammatical forms collectively owned by speakers of a language, residing in the brain of each speaker. Parole on the other hand, is the part of language that reflects its variant nature, and is not accounted for in linguistic description. Saussure's theory formed the basis for traditional or classical grammar.

Thereafter, notable linguists who emerged with their versions of linguistic theory include **Henry Sweet and Firth in Britain, Bloomfield, Bloch, Fries Harris, Hockett, Nida and Boas, Pike in the United States** Their theories replaced traditional grammar and established structuralism.

By **1957**, **Noam Chomsky** emerged with his linguistic theory which he defined as being concerned with the grammatical system of an ideal speaker-listener in a homogenous speech community. For him, the object of study is the speaker's knowledge of his/her language which he refers to as competence. Like Saussure, he makes a distinction between language as knowledge that resides in the brain and its actual use which he refers to as performance. Chomsky's work established ***generativism*** as a theoretical approach. Theories based on this approach include the standard theory, extended standard theory, generative grammar, government and binding (1981), **minimalist theory** (1995), x-bar theory; others are autosegmental phonology by Goldsmith 1976, and lexical phonology by Kiparsky 1982.

Linguistics in Nigeria

The growth of linguistics in places like Europe, India, and the United States of America as briefly described in the preceding sections far outweighs linguistic efforts in Nigeria. Indeed, there is no record of linguistic research in Nigeria before the late 18th century. The earliest recorded linguistic efforts are in the late 19th and early 20th centuries led mostly by missionaries. With about 510 languages spoken, most of the languages do not have written forms. As a result, the concentration of early linguistic efforts was on developing orthographies. It is reported that the first Nigerian language samples were collected by the Portuguese around 1600, but more detailed study of some African languages was published in 1812. The work included vocabularies for six Nigerian languages-***Hausa, Kanuri, Fulani, Igbo, Ijaw, and Ibibio***. Apart from Yoruba which had a Nigerian, **Samuel Ajayi Crowther** work on the language, other linguistic works were conducted by non-Nigerians in the early period of linguistics in Nigeria. In the 1840s, the Scottish Presbyterian mission at Calabar worked on Efik; the Methodist and Roman Catholic mission worked on Yoruba and Igbo. Notable among individuals who carried out linguistic work on Nigerian languages are **Clapperton** between **1824-1844**, **Bowdich** in **1819**, **Hannah Kilham, Raban, Baudin** in **1884**, **Westermann**, **Reverend Wood** on **Yoruba**; **Mignod** in **1914** and **Schon** in **1844** on **Hausa**; and **Abraham** between **1934 - 1949** on **Hausa** and **Idoma**. Linguistic studies in Nigeria blossomed with the establishment of the first University at Ibadan in 1948. The first generation of academic linguists who researched on Nigerian languages were non-Nigerians, they included **William Welmers, Robert Armstrong** and **Kay Williamson**. They in turn trained the first group of Nigerian linguists who have also trained others. They include **Ayo Bamgbose, Oladele Awobuluyi** who worked on **Yoruba**; and **Ben Elugbe** who worked on **Edoid languages**. The main focus among other linguistic research interests has remained the description of Nigerian languages. Currently, less than one-third of 510 Nigerian languages have their orthographies.

Aim and Relevance of Linguistics

Linguistics takes as data all human languages. According to Saussure (1991: 6-7), the aims of linguistics are as follows:

1. To describe all known languages and record their history. This involves tracing the history of language families and, as far as possible, reconstructing the parent language of each family;

2. To determine the forces operating, permanently and universally in all language, and to formulate general laws which account for all particular linguistics phenomena historically attested.

3. To delimit and define linguistics itself.

CONCLUSION - Linguistics is unique as a discipline because it attempts to study a social phenomenon like human language from a scientific perspective. It is also unique because it has forged close relationships with several other disciplines to the extent that the line of demarcation is often not so clear.

The Basic Characteristics of Human Language

1. All languages are equal - There are no inferior languages, all languages have the capacity to express from simple to complex ideas. Their vocabulary can be extend to include

Their vocabulary can be extended to include new words for new concepts.

2. All languages change over time - No language is static, all languages are dynamic unless they are not being used in daily social interaction. Languages change because new ideas emerge, and language is the vehicle used to express such ideas. However, certain aspects of language change more frequently than others such as *vocabulary* versus *grammar*.

3. All languages have an arbitrary relationship between sounds and meanings - There is no one to one correspondence between sounds and meaning in any language. Even for sign language, the relationship between the sign and its meaning is mostly arbitrary.

4. All languages have a finite set of sounds - Languages use between 10 and 70 meaningful sounds. Although human beings are capable of making thousands of noises, only very few of them constitute meaningful sounds used in speech. These speech sounds are shared by several languages. For example, almost every language has sounds produced by the *lower lip* touching the *upper teeth* as in **/f/** and **/v/,** but no language uses any sound produced by the *upper lip* touching the *lower teeth*. These meaningful sound segments are combined to form words which are combined to form sentences. The sound segments that create distinctiveness in the meaning of words are technically referred to as "***phonemes***". For example, in English **/p, b, t, d, k, g, i, a, e, u**/ etc. are meaningful sounds. **(i).** ***pan*** **vs** ***ban*** **(ii).** ***ten*** **vs** ***den*** **(iii).** ***kate*** **vs** ***gate*** * In (i), **/p/** and **/b**/ are the sounds that make a difference in the meaning of the two words. In (ii) it is **/t/** and **/d/,** while it is /k/ and /g/ in (iii).

5. All Language have consonant and vowel sounds - human language comprises discreet sound segments called consonant (C) and vowels (V). It is the combination of these consonants and vowels that forms words.

Consonants are the sound that we produce with a disturbance of the air tract in our mouth like **/p, b, t, d, k, g, m, n, s, z, f, v/** etc. In the production of these sounds you will feel that there is no free flow of the air from your mouth. Whereas in the production of vowel sounds there is no obstruction of air. The air flows out freely as in **/a, e, i, o, u/.**

6. All languages have grammars - They contain rules for the same purpose: to produce grammatically correct sentences in that language. The grammatical categories are also similar I that *nouns* and *verbs* are found in all languages. However, they may be expressed more differently from one language to another. An element could be a *noun* in one language, and a *verb* in another. In addition many languages have *verbs* that would be considered as *adjectives* in other languages.

7. All languages make gender distinctions - Languages reflect universal semantic features of male or female, human or animate distinctions.

8. **All languages have a way of making statements, questions, commands, negation, and time** - Every language has the traditional functions of making declarative, interrogative, imperative, exclamatory sentences, and contrary of statements, by negating such statements. Languages have different ways of forming negations.

8. Human languages have ways of indicating the case relationship between the nouns and verbs - In every human language, once a verb has been located in a sentence, a number of questions may arise about verb. Questions like: Who is doing it? Who or what is it being done to? Where and when is it being done? What is being used to do it? And more other questions, depending on the type a verb is. The relationship that a noun has to a verb in a sentence, based on this type of information, is called case. Case is important in keeping
straight what is going on in sentences. Different languages use different methods in showing case like word order, special morphemes attached to the *nouns*, *prepositions* and *postpositions* (come after the nouns). English has prepositions just like ***Ibibio***, while a language like ***Navajo*** has position.

English	Ibibio	Novajo
Gate	úsúng	porta

To the gate ké úsúng portae By the gate mfk úsúng porta

9. Human languages have a means of indicating the tense and aspect of the verb - Tense refers to the time or a state of an event. Tense is the reference of action to the time it took place, while aspect refers to its frequency, duration and whether or not it has been completed. Some languages prefer one than the other, and the ways chosen to indicate them in speech or writing will reflect this preference.

The perception of time and duration also vary from one language to another. Many languages add morphemes to the verb to indicate tense or aspect like French.

Although, English has a *past tense verb* (usually –ed), it has no *future conjugation* and conveys the same information either by placing the auxiliary verb "*will*" before the main verb, or by using the *present tense* and a time word as in '*My mother comes tomorrow*'.

10. Human languages have ways of combining simple sentences into complex ones - Human languages have different structures. These different structures are achieved by combining different main clauses and subordinate clauses into complex structures like compound sentence, complex sentence, multiple sentence and compound-complex sentence. The characteristics may be more than these, but these are the common features of human language.

11. All languages can be learned - Any child, regardless of geographical location, ethnic background, has the capacity to learn any language to which he or she is exposed.

SIGN LANGUAGE

Sign Language, is a communication system using gestures that are interpreted visually. Many people in deaf communities around the world use sign languages as their primary means of communication. These communities include both deaf and hearing people who converse in sign language. But for many deaf people, sign language serves as their primary, or native, language, creating a strong sense of social and cultural identity.

DEFINITION OF SIGN LANGUAGE

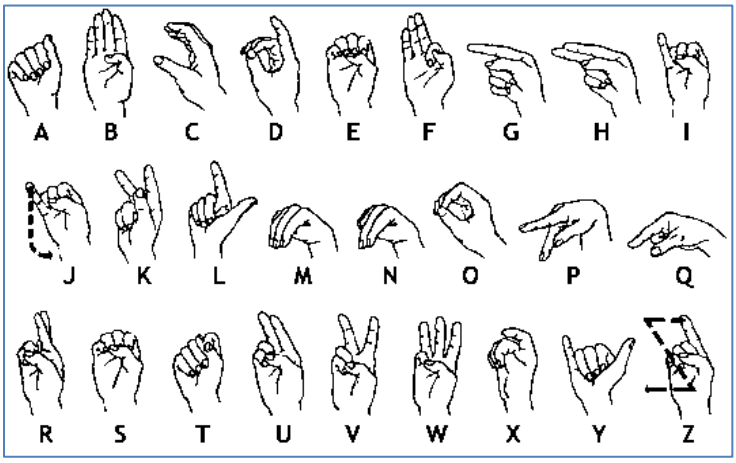
Riekehof, **Lottie L.** (1987:9) defines a sign language as "**A language that uses manual symbols to represent ideas and concepts. The term is generally used to describe the language used by deaf people in which both manual signs and finger spelling are employed"**

Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia defines a sign language as a **"language which uses manual communication, body language and lip patterns instead of sound to convey meaning by simultaneously combining hand shapes, orientation and movement of the hands, arms or body, and facial expressions to express a speaker's thoughts fluidly".**

In other words, sign language makes use of different hand shapes (i.e. shapes of the hand), hands and arms movements, body gestures as well as facial expressions to convey the users' feelings, thoughts, desires, intentions, aspirations, etc. People who make use of sign language to communicate are called Signers.

From the foregoing, the elements of a sign are Hand shape (or Hand form), Orientation (or Palm Orientation), Location (or Place of Articulation), Movement, and Non-manual markers (or Facial Expression). These elements are summarized in the acronym HOLME:

• H - Handshapes or Handforms
• Orientation - Orientation or Palm orientation
• L - Location or place of articulation
• M - Movement
• E - Expressions of the facial (facial expressions) or non-manual markers



In linguistic terms, sign languages are as rich and complex as any spoken language, despite the common misconception that they are not "real languages". Linguists have studied many sign languages and found them to have every linguistic component required to be considered as true languages. Proof of the mature status of sign languages can be found in the growing body of sign language poetry, and other performances stage. Indeed, the poetic mechanisms available to signing poets are not all available to a speaking poet. This sign language mechanisms offer new, exciting and more rewarding ways for poems to reach and move audiences.

Sign languages commonly develop in deaf communities and are used primarily by the deaf, dumb, or partially deaf, people who have speech impairments or *Aphasia* (i.e. loss of the ability to speak or understand spoken language), by friends and family members of these set of people, and by interpreters.

B. ALTERNATE AND PRIMARY SIGN LANGUAGE

The earlier view of a sign language as a limited set of gestures used in place of a '*real'* language is close to what is now technically known as an alternate sign language. Yule (1996:202) defines an alternate sign language as **"a system of gestures developed by speakers for limited communication in a specific context where speech cannot be used".**

Consider the mode of communication between the choir master and the choristers during a choral performance, or the mode of communication inside a radio or television studio during a recording session. These are examples of alternate sign language, and except the users are deaf/dumb, they usually have a spoken language as their first language. In contrast, a primary sign language is the first language of a group that does not have access to a spoken language

C. SIMULTANEITY IN SIGN LANGUAGE, SPEED, MOTION AND FORCE OF SIGN

Sign languages exploit the unique features of the visual-gestural medium. Oral language is linear - only one sound can be made or received at a time. Sign language, on the other hand, is visual; hence a whole scene can be taken in at once. Information can be loaded onto several channels and expressed simultaneously. As an illustration, in spoken English one could utter the phrase, "*I drove here*". To add information about the drive, one would have to make a longer phrase or even add a second phrase, such as, "*I drove here along a winding road*," or "*I drove here. It was a nice drive*." However, in sign language information about the shape of the road or the pleasing nature of the drive can be conveyed simultaneously with the verb '*drive'* by inflecting the motion of the hand, or by taking advantage of non-manual signals such as body posture and facial expression, at the same time that the verb '*drive'* is being signed. Therefore, whereas in spoken English the phrase "*I drove here and it was very pleasant*" is longer than "*I drove here*", in sign language the two may be the same length (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, 2007). This unique feature of simultaneity in sign language is not available in oral language, where the sounds

That comprise words are mostly sequential, with the exception of supra-segmental (or auto-segmental) features such as tone, stress, vowel harmony, etc.

A sign can be made slowly or with speed; it can be static on motion have it can be made gently or with force. All these elements are curucial in signing as they help to portray the full meaning of a message. In terms of speed, the sign "hurry" is moved more rapidly when one is saying "*Hurry, we're leaving now*", than when one is saying "*Don't hurry, we have plenty of time*". With regards to force and motion, for instance, you may indicate your love for a person by gently crossing your hands over your chest or you may indicate a stronger feeling by clasping the hands more tightly to the chest and even adding a rocking motion. The sign for "require" becomes "demand" when made more forcible. The faster and more forcible the sign or the stronger the facial expression, the stronger the feeling(s) intended (Riekehof, 1987).

D. HISTORY OF THE SIGN LANGUAGE

The recorded history of sign language in Western society extends from the **16th century**. In **1755**, **Abbé de l'Épée** founded the **first public school for deaf children** in **Paris** with **Laurent Clerc**. After his graduation, **Laurent Clerc** went to the United States with **Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet** to found the **American School for the deaf** in **Hartford, Connecticut**. Gallaudet's son, **Edward Miner Gallaudet** founded the first college for the deaf in **1857** and in **1864** this school

Gallaudet University, located in Washington, D.C. This was the first Liberal Arts school for the advanced education of the deaf and hard-of-hearing, and is still the world's only university in which all programmes and services are specifically designed to accommodate deaf and hard-of-hearing students. The university is named after Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, a notable figure in the advancement of education for the deaf.

E. TYPES/VERITIES OF THE SIGN LANGUAGE

Linguists have found that sign languages and spoken languages share many features. Like spoken languages, which use units of sounds to produce words, sign languages use units of form. These units are composed of four basic hand forms: hand shape, such as an open hand or closed fist; hand location, such as on the middle of the forehead or in front of the chest; hand movement, such as upward or downward; and hand orientation, such as the palm facing up or out as for example:

There is **an International Sign Language** (sometimes called ***Gestuno***) that transcends national borders and which is often used during international deaf events such as the **Deaflympics** (**Olympic Games for the Deaf**) and meetings of the World Federation of the Deaf. But, there is nothing like a universal sign language. Wherever communities of deaf people exist, sign languages develop. Consequently, various signed "modes" of spoken languages have been developed, such as **Signed English, Adamorobe Sign Language** (Ghana), **Warlpiri Sign Language** (Australia), just as there are varieties of spoken and written language. As a matter of fact, hundreds of sign languages are used around the world and are at the core of local deaf communities/cultures. Although sign language is used in many countries, each has developed its own system, which has been standardized to some extent in those countries. It also appears that most sign languages are named after the locality, country or geographic region where they are used. Some of these sign languages have obtained some form of legal or official recognition, while others have no official status at all.

Sign language differs from one geographic region to another. However, when people who use different sign languages meet, communication is significantly easier than when people of different spoken languages meet. Sign language, in this respect, gives access to an international deaf community. But, many different sign languages exist that are mostly mutually unintelligible. For example, British Sign Language and American Sign Language are quite different and mutually unintelligible, even though British and American spoken English are mutually intelligible. The two most popular and highly developed sign languages are **American Sign Language** (ASL) (also known as **Ameslan**) and **British Sign Language** (BSL). ASL is considered to be the most refined and complete sign system in the world and it is used mostly in the United States of America and Canada. Nigeria too adopts **American Sign Language** as its **official sign language**. **British Sign Language**, on the other hand, is used mainly in the United Kingdom. Other sign language varieties include **Australian Aboriginal sign languages, Kata Kolok sign language** in **Bali** (Indonesia), **Adamorobe sign language** in **Ghana** and **Yucatec Maya sign language** in **Mexico**. Just as every oral language has regional varieties or dialects, each of the sign languages mentioned above also has its regional varieties.

In spoken languages units of sound combine to make meaning. Separately, b, e, and t have no meaning. However, together they form the word bet. Sign languages contain units of form that by themselves hold no meaning, but when combined create a word. Spoken languages and sign languages differ in the way these units combine to make words, however. In spoken languages units of sound and meaning are combined sequentially. In sign languages, units of form and meaning are typically combined simultaneously.

E. MISCONCEPTION OF THE SIGN LANGUAGE

There are several misconceptions about sign language which need to be clarified.

One common misconception is that sign language is **pantomime** (***a method of performing using only actions and not words***). Sign languages are definitely not ***pantomime***. Rather, signs are largely ***arbitrary***, with no necessary or direct visual relationship to their ***referents***, much as most of spoken language is not ***onomatopoeic***. Sign languages have complex grammars of their own, and can be used to discuss any topic, from the ***simple*** and ***concrete*** to the ***lofty*** and ***abstract***.

This would not be possible if it were ***pantomime***. Another misconception is that sign languages are somehow dependent on spoken languages. That is, that they are spoken languages spelled out in gesture. Sign language is independent of spoken language; it is not a visual/gestural rendition or simplified version of a spoken language. The use of fingerspelling was once taken as evidence that sign languages are simplified versions of spoken languages, but this is not the use of finger for spelling is merely one tool among many other tools used for signing.

People tend to believe that speakers of the same oral language will use the same sign language. Or that deaf and/or hard-of-hearing people from the same community (where the same language is spoken) will use the same sign language. But, this is often not the case. Countries which use languages; whereas an area that contains more than one spoken language might use only one sign language. For example, British Sign Language and American Sign Language are quite different and mutually unintelligible, even though the hearing people of Britain and America both speak English language.

Yet another misconception is that sign languages were invented by hearing people. Hearing teachers of deaf schools, such as **Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet**, are often incorrectly referred to as inventors of sign language. However, this claim has not been substantiated. Sign languages are normally generated by the deaf, dumb, and hard-of-hearing people.